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Christmas Number

Richard Roberts
"Keeping Christmas in the Heart"

Francis C. Wheaton
"Good News—Not Advice"

Edward L. Parsons
"The Word Became Flesh"

George A. Buttrick
"Why the Church?"

Andrew Gillies
"A Word to the Discouraged"

Holland F. Burr
"Bread"

George A. Campbell
"A Christmas Prayer"

PREACHER PROBLEMS

Dwight Bradley
"Can a Minister Keep the Amateur Spirit?"

Keeping Christmas in the Heart

BY RICHARD ROBERTS

In the fulness of the time, God sent forth his son born of a woman . . . and now God sends forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts crying Abba, Father. Galatians 4:4, 6.

Until Christ be formed in you. Galatians 4:19.

I WANT to say a little to you this morning about keeping Christmas in the heart. It is not an easy place to keep Christmas in, for our hearts are grown hard; nevertheless if you do not keep Christmas in your heart, you will assuredly keep it nowhere else. You will do no more than keep a vain old pagan holiday, an affair of meat and drink. And nothing shows how thin our common Christianity has become than the wholesale paganization of Christmas. It is what the biologists would call a reversion to type. For while it is very doubtful that Jesus was born on the 25th day of December, it seems to be not at all doubtful that the church began very early to commemorate his birth on the day of the Saturnalia, a day of rank debauchery for the superior and well-to-do. But it was always a happy day for one class in that rotten old society—the slaves and other submerged folk who on that one day of the year were free to follow their own devices. And those whom Christ had touched took it to celebrate the coming of him who had set their spirits free all the year round.

That apparently is how Christmas was born—an old heathen holiday born again, rescued from the bondage of corruption by the spirit of Christ. Alas, that it should have backslidden into that old slavery, become a thing not of the spirit but of the belly, a gross, vulgar, ugly business—aye, even a blasphemy—

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high jinks in fashionable hotels! I am not inveighing against the turkey and the plum-pudding. God forbid! they are his gifts. Still less against grown folk growing young and simple, and (if you like) a little childish too, forgetting their foolish dignities and playing with the children and filling the house with laughter and a happy noise; that kind of thing is not far from the kingdom of heaven. But still, it is a meaningless business if the bells are not ringing in your souls, if you forget the song of the angels, if you do not go through the day with great resounding scriptures making glad the secret places of your heart. "Unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given!" "Unto us this day is born a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." "Glory to God in the highest: on earth peace: goodwill toward men." It is not even the beginning of Christmas unless it is Christmas in the heart.

Christ Formed in You

But the matter goes a good deal deeper than that. Let me recall to you two great words of St. Paul to the Galatians. First, he told them how he was in travail "until Christ be formed in you"; and again: "In the fulness of the time, God sent forth his son born of a woman . . . and now God sends forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts crying Abba, Father." It is easy to see what St. Paul has in his mind. The Nativity is not a miracle that happened once, but is to go on happening all the time. The crib is to be translated from the cattleshed into your heart and mine. The manger is to be universalized. What happened in Bethlehem is to happen in us. If there is any meaning in the Incarnation at all, it is the symbol and the sacrament of the kindling of divinity in our nature, the Word becoming flesh in you and me.

I have often quoted that fine old Puritan saying, "The perseverance of the saints is an endless series of new beginnings." That is not only a good reading of human experience, it is also good biology. For the evolution of life is also an affair of new beginnings all the way, and as it is throughout all God's handiwork, so it is in your life. You have to repent not once, but always. Conversion? You may be converted once; yet you need to be reconverted every day. Salvation is not a single decisive moment of experience; you have to be saved again and again. And it is not once that Christ has to be born in us, not once that God has to send the spirit of his Son into our hearts—but many and many a time. Christmas comes but once a year, it is true. But it does come every year, to remind us of this ever-new ever-transforming miracle that has to be wrought in us if our souls are to live. And the deeper keeping of Christmas is to get ready, as I said, for this quickening experience and to enter into it.

Getting Ready for a Messenger

To get ready for it, I say. And the first part of that preparation is the housecleaning. You remember that, before the Passover, the Jews have a careful, meticulous, housecleaning, a sort of ceremonial purification of the place where the feast is to be kept; and I imagine that the idea behind this sacrament of cleansing is that the house should be fit to receive a celestial guest—the messenger of the passover. There is a story of a child who was asked why the house should be kept neat and clean, and who answered: "Because company may come in any time"—a good if not the whole answer.

And a very good answer for you and me this Christmastide. Company, strange, invisible but gracious and uplifting may come in any time. Have you ever read into the enthralling parable of Santa Claus its heavenly meaning? Have you ever given any thought to what you might too be doing when you see the little children hanging up their stockings on the bedpost? Has it ever occurred to you that there may be coming to you a Messenger with a priceless gift, if he can find in you a spot made ready to receive it? Might it not be worth your while to clean out that old heart of yours and hang it up empty where the Divine Messenger may see it, and by his celestial magic settle himself into it?

We can do with the housecleaning, anyway; for these hearts of ours are cluttered up with rubbish and litter. Think of the things we harbor there—the silly pride that feeds upon itself and is in the end only dust and chaff, the foolish contemptible little grouches and grudges and envies to which we give houseroom; aye, and festering hatreds and remembering of injuries that eat up our substance—vermin of evil thoughts and base desires and impure motives—and in the dark corners, a debris of broken purposes and cowardly fears and secret disloyalties and hidden carnalities. Look around and see what manner of place you have made of this heart of yours, where it was the good pleasure of God that once more the Word should be made flesh, this holy manger that God built into you for his child, this miraculous Bethlehem in your being. Aye and there's nothing for it—for me, God forgive me!—but to turn the wretched thing inside out and try to throw its dismal contents, this foul and disease-bearing refuse, into the deep merciful river of the divine oblivion, so help me God! Let me at least keep Christmas with a clean heart.

"Unto You Is Born a Savior"

And if we can do that, anything may happen to us. Before you know it, you will discover that you have got "company"—warm, comforting, quickening company. You could not see him coming; for his wheels were on no road, nor his sail on any sea. But by a secret stair of his own he came, and found room in your inn—you happy host of so enriching a guest! You will tell yourself that it was a good thing to have cleaned the house. And a star will shine above your head; and wise men will say that the King has been born in you and will worship and honor him in you. And there will be angels singing that old recitative in your heart—"Unto you, in the city of your

heart, is born a Savior which is Christ the Lord." And you will want to join in the grand chorus, "Gloria in Excelsis Deo": "Glory to God in the highest: on earth peace: good will toward men."

And you will discover that you yourself have had a new birth. For you will have come to possess a priceless thing, a thing you had once but lost long ago, that lovely thing you are trying (but ah! so clumsily) to recapture when you unbend on Christmas day and romp with the children—the spirit of a child. Would you not give worlds to go back there, to that world of innocence and simplicity and imagination and vision and unclouded faith? God forgive us our

RICHARD ROBERTS

dull sophistication, our heavy grown-up-ness; our purblind *"savoir faire,"* our thick-skulled hard-headedness, this mature woodenness that we have labored so hard to acquire, this insane worldly wisdom which has cost us so much but which we should be so much better without.

I don't suppose you believe a word of what I'm saying, you poor men and women with the dried-up hearts, who live in the sad illusions of what you call your experience and wisdom and knowledge: but it's God's truth I'm telling you! And when this holy child is born in you, you will shed all that adult nonsense, and you will begin to see the real things that the children see, the good fairies they believe in, their angels (as Jesus called them) that do always behold the face of their Father. And other forgotten and incredible things will you see; but best of all, you will see the kingdom of God . . . and the Son of God, the glory in the midst of it. It will take you some time to see clearly in this unfamiliar light, but everything is there for you to see as you grow simpler and your sight grows clearer.

And the two chiefest things that you will see are Man and God.

Men Seen "As Trees Walking"

We moderns have never got past the stage of seeing men as trees walking. In this wretched civilization that we live in we never see men; we see capitalists and workingmen, employes and store clerks, lords and ladies and proletarians—just fragments of manhood, cogs and pins in the political and economic machine. So and so, we say, employs so many "hands"—hands, forsooth, just bits of men; hands to be used, when they are souls to be honored and cherished and loved. Oh, I know all about them, know how mean and crooked and troublesome they can be, how ridiculous it sounds to talk about honoring and loving them; but if it does sound ridiculous, the trouble is not in them but in us. We are not seeing straight, not seeing them as God sees them; and God loves them. "And the great cry that goes up from our manufacturing cities," said John Ruskin, "is all in very deed for this, that there we manufacture everything but men. We blanch cotton, we refine sugar, we strengthen steel, we shape pottery, but to strengthen or to refine or to shape a single human soul does not enter into our estimate of advantages." And for this, this civilization must repent or perish.

No, we are not seeing men—unless we see John Smith with a halo round his head, because he is a potential house of divinity; and that is the main fact about every man. For us there can be no inferior classes on the face of this earth—only your brothers for whom Christ died. Mazzini looked to a time "when the lips of patriots will cease to utter the word 'foreigner' as a reproach, which in men calling themselves brothers is a blasphemy against the cross of Christ." And you may take that as the acid test of your personal Christianity.

I confess to you that with my very insular prejudices it comes rather hard to me; it's a difficult bunker to get over. But there it is; and we might as well face it. Peace on earth! sang the angels. It appears that we should translate the last part of the song thus: "Peace on earth among men of good will." And indeed the only road to peace, to end this mad riot of international bad blood, is to set up a contagion of resolute good will. And the best you can do to help on this happy wholesome epidemic is yourself to become a man of good will. And that begins to happen when this holy child takes your heart for a crib.

Glory, Glory, Glory!

Then, too, you begin to be conscious of a wonder round about you to which you cannot give a name; and you will call it "glory" as men always do when they behold a thing that is beyond speech. When I was a lad, I remember a revivalist coming our way, a saintly man with a gift of revelation. There were

men and women there who saw the light, and they could not contain themselves for joy; and the one word they kept repeating was Glory, Glory, Glory! I haven't seen much rejoicing of that kind in any church that I've had to do with since those far-off days; but I testify that I would give the years of my life to see it once more.

Oh, don't suppose that I mean the kind of revival that sends men off on a vulgar scramble to save their own skins and, as Francis Thompson says, saves them by the barrow-load—nothing of that mean and degrading exploitation of men's selfish fears. But a voice that might open the heavens and show us a face that we should know without being told that it was the face of God; and we should shout for very joy at the sight. It is my sorrow, as I know it is my shame, that I have not said to you the word that might rend the heavens. I would to God I might say it here and now. Perhaps some day the Lord may give it to me to say; or perhaps give it to one of you—for God is not tied up to us preachers! But what matters who says it if only it *is* said? And yet you need no preacher to thunder it at you, if you will only let Christ be formed in you.

He will open your eyes upon that ineffable wonder, and you will find yourself going about with the bells ringing in your soul and a singing in your heart: *Glory, Glory to God in the Highest!*

"Good News!"—Not Advice

By Francis C. Wheaton

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel ["good news," Moffatt] of the kingdom. Matthew 9:35.

EVERYONE likes news. Few crave advice. News, good or bad, uplifting or disheartening, receives our first attention. All news has an element of newness and originality. It stimulates our imagination, it arouses our interest, it spurs us to action—or it puts new fears or anxieties into our hearts. The biggest news has to do with persons, individuals or groups of persons. The exploits of men and women good or bad make good news items. A group of men are seen standing together listening rather indifferently to one who is apparently giving some advice to the others. Now an individual strides toward the group, his face bright with some pressing news. He thrusts before them a newspaper with black headlines—"Lindbergh Lands in France." Immediately all thought of advice of any nature is gone. Eyes and ears strain to get the details of this wonderful exploit. Eager questions seek the greatest amount of information in the shortest possible time. So news appeals to the human mind.

Newspaper reporters are constantly on the alert for news. They pursue news like hounds and never give up until they have the "story" and then it is fed to the waiting public with little left to the imagination—lurid in detail, appealing to human love of the spectacular. News comes in batches. Not every issue has large headlines. The size of the headlines does not indicate the news value, either. Some news is temporal while other news is timeless in its import. It is good for newspaper readers to realize the relative value of daily news and headline material. One wishes there might be some standard of measurement. Time judges and tells the relative value of news.

Old Testament "Headlines"

However, there were writers who had a standard by which they gave judgment on the affairs and experiences of men. This was the standard of Old Testament authors. "King Asa," we read, "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord," while "King Ahab of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." These news writers lived in times when there was plenty of headline news, especially in the northern kingdom, where there were revolutions and assassinations in rapid succession. One dramatic incident will occur to you wherein Jehu killed two kings, Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah, and then proceeded to Jezreel where he murdered the treacherous Jezebel—all in an afternoon. What headline news for a modern paper! Here was the beginning of a revolution with high aims and purposes for the people, but the army captain was not equal to the task and the writer of Kings applied the news rule to Jehu in saying, "He took no heed to walk in the way of the Lord with all his heart." In spite of its swift and terrible action this news event was temporal and comparative in its value. Some news affects all of life, some affairs startle men but are soon forgotten.

Other writers of scripture have brought revolutionary news that was just as startling and acceptable as Jehu's announcement of the overthrow of wicked rulers. The news I speak of was not brought by a messenger who made use of such murderous and cruel zeal as Jehu used. The intensity of his purpose was equally strong, his conviction of its importance was fully as great and the news he gave the world is no less striking. All was not well in Israel, so Jehu came. All was not—and is not—well on earth, so Jesus has come. Sin, no matter what its form, leads men away from God, deprives them of their birthright and destroys the abundance of their living.

Eternally Important "News"

The announcement of the coming of this messenger of good news was as dramatic as Jehu's furious drive to Jezreel. A wonderful star swung in the heavens. Wise men came in haste from the east to see a babe cradled in a manger. Silently, peacefully, heralded by angels singing "Glory to God in the highest and on

earth peace, good will to men," a little ambassador came with glorious "good news." Here is headline news—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life." Predicted and foretold, it escaped the headlines, but God wrote the news in the heavens. Here is news of universal and eternal importance. The baby Jesus grew to manhood, accepted the mission he was sent to accomplish, and went among all the cities and villages teaching and preaching the "good news" of the kingdom.

His message fell on the ears of men with all the

FRANCIS C. WHEATON

freshness of front page news. It involved a new birth, it meant a new life. It demanded new standards, it meant new names for new and better characters. This good news brings into the hearts of humanity new vision and new purpose. It creates new brotherhood. It presents a new commandment—"Love one another as I have loved you." It predicts and forecasts a new heaven and a new earth, a new creation. You will find it all explained in a New Testament which is a new covenant between God and man. "Behold," says Jesus, "I make all things new." Jesus went from the city to the village and first he proclaimed, not advice, but good news. He taught men and women how to apply that good news to their lives that they might live more abundantly. Everywhere he found men and women crying, with wants they could not satisfy. That same cry comes to his disciples from today's troubled humanity.

Our Trivial Wants

We want a great many things. Some professor has figured it out this way. In 1870 we had 72 wants but only 16 of these were physical necessities. However in 1930 those wants had increased to 484; 94 of these wants are seemingly necessary. He tells us that 365,000 attractive and helpful articles are offered today in our modern department stores as an aid to the housekeeper. There are 100 or more mechanical devices serving the modern home. This is just in the realm of physical things. No wonder we get dizzy with life! The messianic bearer of good news recognized our physical needs and the daily worries of men and women in this material world. Yet he insisted that we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," saying that these other things are sought after by the unspiritual and for the Christian must take second place. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." So sang the Psalmist and Jesus voices this same cry for himself and his followers.

Good News About God

God always hears the cry of need and he has heard this dominant call from the hearts of men. God sent Jesus with the "God News," the God-spell, the good news of salvation. This news is healing to the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, freedom to them that are bound. It brings comfort to those who mourn, it is a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and a great proclamation of God's grace and love.

What is this Good News?

It is good news about God. Jesus illuminates the fact of God as a loving heavenly Father as the rising sun dispels the dimness and vagueness of dawn. The Fatherhood of God receives new meaning as we hear Jesus teach the value of the human soul. Each individual is valuable in God's sight. The very hairs of our heads are numbered. He who sees the sparrow fall has placed infinite value on you and on me. What good news to proclaim to any who feel neglected and lost! God cares. What good news to tell any who are discouraged and disheartened with life! God cares for you. Regardless of race, creed, color—yes, even though sin has made your soul scarlet, God seeks every soul that he may heal it and save it for nobler and truer living.

News of the Kingdom

Again this "good news" tells of the kingdom of God. Jesus announces that God's big family is open to all who will come. There are no special classes; we shall find here no nation or race exalted above another, but all souls equal in God's sight. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, publican and pharisee, sinner and saint, rich and poor, whatever their station or state, here all have an opportunity to enter God's kingdom. This kingdom is for you and for me a far greater state than we have dreamed. "Eye has not seen nor ear heard nor has it entered into the heart of man the things God has provided for those that love him." The kingdom of God is spiritual blessedness far surpassing the greatest happiness earth can offer. There men will be fully satisfied. Materialism never has, nor will it ever make men happy. It is

only in the spiritual realm that we shall ever have complete happiness. This state of being, says Jesus, can begin here and now in your heart and mine and from the heart it reaches forward into eternity. Here is good news to the oppressed. Here is good news of freedom and justice. This is what Jesus came to proclaim. What good news!

Good News of Salvation

My friends, the love of God and the kingdom of God, great as they are, cannot exhaust the "good news." Jesus himself is good news. His person reveals the presence of God in human life. As Rhoda stood at the door and announced to the praying church that Peter was on the threshold in person, so Jesus stands at the door of every heart, knocking, knocking, and announces the presence of God available to every soul. What a message! The word become flesh, dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. Sin has shut off the vision of God. Sin has drawn the veil and brought darkness. Jesus walks among us now and announces power to forgive sins, and does it. He is Light, Water, Bread, a Savior to all mankind. The forgiveness he brings is not for the few, but for all who seek repentance and forgiveness. Jesus exposes sin in all its trickery and deceitfulness. He shows us what a life free from its control could accomplish. He demonstrates that only the pure in heart can hope to see God. Here is good news—"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." "If a man love me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

But the core and key of the "good news" is seen in the cross. "It is the key of life," says E. Stanley Jones. Understand the cross and you understand God. Christ explains the riddle of life as he hangs on his cross. If the cross reveals anything, it shows God suffering with and for humanity. God is so close to us that he suffers with us. On the cross Jesus joins hands with God and man. There he bridges the gap and makes a highway from the heart of man to the throne of God. We may not be able to explain the good news of the cross, but we know its work of grace in the heart of a man. We understand its meaning when we see a missionary doctor eating deadly germs that the lives of dying Chinese may be saved. We understand what it can do in a human soul when we recall Livingstone's heroic sacrifice in African jungles that the black man might have the light of life. We see a mother giving everything for a wayward son or daughter, regardless of self, and then we dimly comprehend the significance of the cross as good news. It makes men lose lives that they may truly find them in Christlikeness.

What the World Hungers For

Do you not agree that this is what the world hungers and thirsts after? This "good news" will satisfy many longings, material and spiritual. God, a loving heavenly Father seeking the best for his children. The kingdom of God, a comprehensive program to meet man's need and provide a program for noblest, abundant life. Jesus Christ, God's personal messenger coming to save humanity. Sins forgiven, another chance, an abundant way of living made clear and the truth that a life of sacrifice and love alone will satisfy. That is the great good news! It is far more than advice.

Hitherto men have heard rumors. Jesus brings official news, complete and final. He gives substance and form to many faint and tremulous hopes held by many along the path of the ages.

"Official" News

If I should announce a cure for cancer or influenza, you would listen eagerly and then depart with the good news trembling on your lips. You would hasten to every soul so afflicted, within your knowledge, whether friend or foe. You would have good news to reveal. Any person who had such news and failed to tell it would incur our just contempt. It would not be advice, but news. It is beyond the realm of uncertainty and is factual news—a cure, a release from the bondage of sickness and ill health and death.

We are stewards of good news that cancerous sin can be cured. This good news brings assurance that selfish sin can be eliminated. The good news at Pentecost took the world by storm; we have let it deteriorate in our thought to mere advice. As good news, the gospel has carried the forts of sin in magnificent assault, as news it has been powerful to help, and souls have been saved. Let this good news be given as advice and it is rejected and ignored—it has no power to save at all.

We need the good news of the gospel today as never before. Here in the west we need it, with our vast self-assurance, our wild search for diverting pleasure, our mad race for material wealth, our proud demands for personal liberty, our lawlessness. We are full of selfishness and are quite irresponsible. And they need it in the east, where their pessimistic philosophies, spiritual darkness, poverty, caste systems, jealousies and misunderstandings make life a heavy yoke to bear. Jesus stands over against it all saying, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." "I have come that ye might have life and have it more abundantly."

Will We Proclaim It?

The "good news" has been proclaimed to you and to me, we have heard it and know by experience its saving power. Will we proclaim it? How can we keep still and still be disciples of our Lord, who gave his life that all men might know the truth of his gospel, his "good news." Let us proclaim, not advice, but Good News! As Jesus went from village to city teaching everywhere we too shall go to office, home, street—wherever we meet friend, associate and loved ones—proclaiming constantly and faithfully with him the good news of the kingdom of God.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all.

"The Word Became Flesh"

By Edward L. Parsons

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. John 1:14.

ALL of us must have felt the stately solemnity of the opening paragraphs of St. John, the traditional "Gospel" for Christmas day. It is a far cry from "Merry Christmas", from the Yule log and the boar's head of our fathers, from the trees and dinners and pageants of our own day to the vision of the opening heavens. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The eternal is unveiled. There is a glimpse into the remote depths of God's being. There is a hint of destiny and a note of warning. The thought of the little Christ Child, the tender suggestion of family love, the fragrant stories which weave themselves about the manger cradle are gathered up and lost in the awful mystery of the revelation of the Eternal Word.

Our forefathers felt this more keenly than do we. In their preparation for the great feast there rang a note which has been almost utterly absent from ours. "The world is very evil", they sang, and "O Day of wrath and Day of mourning"! They set, or at least the church tried to set, their thoughts upon the swift and terrible manifestations of God's coming into human life. Death and judgment concerned them. The gospel was good news, it is true. It was a gospel of love; a gospel of salvation, and yet a gospel of momentous significance linked to the deep and terrifying drama of human life, a solemn and tremendous thing.

They were right. In pageantry and merrymaking, in the burden of Christmas lists and Christmas shopping, under the bombardment of the advertiser and the appeals of the charitable we lose sight of the deep things. We forget the opening heavens and the eternal Word. We talk glibly of love and peace. We have laughed and been jolly and friendly and generous; but the background of our Christmas mood has not been the momentous words of the gospel. It has been a vague sentiment gathered about the story of the manger in Bethlehem.

Judgment Is Here!

This year we need no forecasts of a divine judgment. That judgment has swept upon us. We need no great hymn to tell us that "the world is very evil." The bread lines in our cities reveal it. Our hearts are wrung by the suffering of the world. Not since the days of the great war have we had forced upon us with such terrible insistence, with such vivid horror, the contrast between the song of the angels and the appalling facts of the life about us. Not since then have we realized so keenly the utter inadequacy of conventional and commercialized gaiety or even of generous giving and sharing to satisfy hearts that reach for some deeper understanding of it all. Gaiety won't help us. Shouting "Merry Christmas", playing with the children, eating and drinking and singing may tide us over the day and help us to forget the heart pangs underneath. But such things will not bring our seeking souls any secure resting-place. We can find that only as we put back of the sin and want on the one side and the gay Christmas customs on the other the real meaning of Christmas. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

An Austere Love

The eternal love is manifested in Christ. In him we have the key for which we seek. In him we discover that God's love is an exacting, a disciplinary love. It took Christ to the cross. The "glad tidings" of Christmas are glad tidings but they are not gay tidings. They neither express nor forecast any life of mere laughing ease. Dance music will not convey their meaning. They sound the solemn note of eternity. The love which overshadows the Child in the manger is rooted in the love of God and that love of God as we know it in Christ is an austere and terrible thing.

It is a terrible thing because it will not let us escape. I am not thinking of that seeking quality of God's love to which Francis Thompson gave immortal form in the "Hound of Heaven", that quality which Matheson felt as he wrote "O Love that will not let me go". I am thinking rather of the fact that in the Incarnation God in his love sets before us as the goal of life nothing short of a life lived completely in him. No half-measures will do. Human life finds its meaning in God and cannot achieve its fulness except in God.

We are trying half-measures most of the time. We have frankly put in separate compartments our religion and our business, our religion and our politics, and sometimes even our religion and our pleasures. But it will not work. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us", means that man derives his worth and achieves his end only as he lives with God. There is no escape. It is God—or nothing.

Children of God

It is one of the most joyous experiences to watch a great group of children clustering around the tree, singing their carols. "Glad tidings of great joy", they sing. It is so wonderful that God loves us, that he sent Jesus into the world, that he sanctified the humble home and lifted the family and the child to preeminence. It is so touching to hear these children vaguely conscious of that love, celebrating it with their childish voices. But sometimes as I have heard them my heart has stood still, appalled at what it all meant, of the destiny set before them, of the stumbling and falling, the failure, the heart sickness, the suffering of soul and body as they struggle on driven by God's love, led by God's love, bound hand and foot

by his love, gladly yielding, stubbornly rebelling, glorying in the vision, ignorant, groping, blind, conquered and conquerors. It is a terrible thing to be the child of God. It is a terrible thing to hear the "glad tidings of great joy." They proclaim for us that destiny which is declared in the gospel that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

All that I have yet to say follows from that destiny which God puts upon us. His love which gives us the highest goal will spare nothing in helping us to reach it. The good news is not of ease and plenty, of undiscriminating and indulgent affection. God loves us. His love is terrifying in the glorious demands which it puts upon us. It is consuming in its passion

Edward L. Parsons

for righteousness. The innocent Child of Christmas day is "a stone of stumbling, a rock of offense." When he reveals the eternal love of God he sets all lesser ideals to be judged by that love. All human strivings which violate that love are ultimately shattered against it. We are afraid for ourselves but God is not afraid for us. His love is exigent, austere. He sets us an impossible ideal. He demands of us impossible tasks in fulfilling it. Christmas is so gay, so merry, just because it is at bottom so momentous, so terrifying. God comes and takes possession of our life and we cannot escape him, not because he is angry but because he loves.

Illustrations are innumerable. This strange universe is so strange because, hostile or indifferent as it seems to human life, in the last analysis the only life which fits it is that which answers to the Word made flesh. It is as if God had fixed invisible molds of love about us. If the individual life cannot adjust itself to such a mold it is condemned to hopeless striving, to unsatisfied effort.

Seeking Happiness

The sages of every race have told us that there is no permanent happiness except in response to the invisible world and to those spiritual values which have been achieved in the long history of mankind. They have told us that money and power and fame bring no lasting joy, nor do the pleasures of the flesh. And one can see the truth of it on every side. The one life which has fitted completely the frame of love goes to death on Calvary, is defeated and discredited, and yet for Jesus and for all who have genuinely sought his way of life there is that ultimate satisfaction which means that the adjustment has been made.

That which we see and sometimes understand in the individual stands out even more vividly in the life of society. I said a few moments ago that we need not be told of a coming judgment for judgment has swept upon us. It is the judgment of love. The nation gives itself over to a philosophy which denies that frame of fellowship and love. It is every man for himself. The community blesses greed and avarice. It consecrates the profit motive. It sets men's minds upon money as the supreme end of life. It sees no wrong in a competition which is ruthless. It looks with pity upon the victims pushed to the wall. It looks with pity but not with indignation upon them. It showers privilege upon those who succeed. An immense and imposing social fabric is erected, and then, crash! The ruin of our industrial order is all about us. The poor wrecks who have been crushed in the fall stand in bread lines, children starve, mothers go mad, fathers take the shortest way out from a world that has beaten them.

The Christmas Message Ignored

And the wreck and the ruin and the misery? What are they but the witness that men have resisted the destiny which God revealed to them on that first Christmas. They have ignored, neglected, opposed the eternal love and they have found it as uncompromising, as ruthless, if you like, as those selfish interests which have broken against it.

It is a hard message; but a true one. The glad tidings of Christmas are glad when through the angels' song our ears may catch the undertone, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." It is an eternal destiny which man has to achieve, not passing ease and transient pleasure.

And as of our social and industrial order, so of our international relations. Those shattered bodies on the fields of France are not the pathetic witnesses of divine anger. They are the witnesses of a love so great that it will risk for men misery and pain and sin that they may achieve the destiny revealed on Christmas morning. The nations of the world have discovered that the settlement of their quarrels by war grows more and more dreadful. They are discovering that only fellowship and cooperation fit the world in which we must live. They have agreed to

resign the stupid way of war. But as yet they are far from putting that agreement into action. Until they do they face the awful discipline of the divine love. It rests upon us to interpret to them the battlefields of France and of Manchuria. Slogans and sentiments will not do it. Only the foundation truth of the Word made flesh, love revealed as the ultimate reality of the universe and of human life, will serve.

As we face then, at Christmas time, this present world upon which judgment has fallen until the very foundations of civilization are shaken, we bring it the age-long message of glad tidings. We tell the age-long story of the heavenly Father's love revealed in the gift of Jesus to mankind. But we tell the story with a deeper note than is our wont. The Word made flesh has revealed to us that this love of God rooted in the depths of his eternal being is so vast, so penetrating, so complete that it can and must be exacting, austere, awful in its impact upon life. It promises us no easy and untroubled way. Its way is the way which led Christ to the cross. But it does promise the destiny of life in God and the coming of God's kingdom to recreate the kingdoms of this world. That is the glad tidings of great joy of which the angels sang.

Why the Church?

By George A. Buttrick

WHAT is the deeper function of the church? What is its vital purpose? Or is it but a cumberer of the earth?

Many voices reply—Mr. Babson leading the chorus—that the church promotes law and order and safeguards property values. Truly! But as an adjunct to the police force or a real estate investment the church is an extravagance, far too prodigal of time and money. Furthermore, in that instance multitudes are self-deceived; they are not aware as they worship that their main concern is with the precinct captain or with a guaranteed mortgage.

But the church is the useful crutch for weak-kneed people, other voices suggest. It is an asylum for timid women and effeminate men. It soothes the sad and comforts the dying, the day may come when we shall require its ministrations—but why hasten the day? Again, the answer is grounded in fact. Living is a dangerous business, and every man seeks his refuge—even though it be no better refuge than a stoicism. But the word "comfort," even in its fine original meaning of "strengthening," does not compass the mission of the church. Men and women of the early church were lit like torches in Nero's garden (it is vastly ridiculous that psychology should make of that an escape mechanism!) and when death came—solemn, portentous death—they prayed and turned death into a fool.

The church was cradled in superstition, others say. So saying, they conduct the church to the edge of the world and bow it exit! But the same psychology which makes this charge was cradled in superstition—in the interpretation by soothsayers of the king's dream. And medicine was cradled in superstition, in weird incantations and weirder witches' brewings. Perhaps the church was cradled in superstition; but superstition was only the cradle, or the swaddling clothes, but never the inborn life.

Everywhere a Church!

Why the church? I know intimately one church that grew in this wise: There was a lawless frontier village in which a few women were wont to gather at sundown to pray that God would raise up to them and theirs a spiritual shepherd. Soon came a missionary; his parish, which he covered on horseback, stretched from Connecticut through Vermont into Canada, then south through western New York to Pennsylvania, then east and north back to Hartford. He had no "church secretary" to help him; nor did he feel overworked. He stood behind the rail in an unfinished courthouse in that village and organized a church. The little company of believers continued to meet in the courthouse or a barn or a school. Finally, amid many a persecution and by many a sacrifice a log cabin church was built, from which by direct descent has come that church today. With minor changes that is the story of hundreds of churches in America and everywhere. I pause to suggest that it does not sound like a plot to uphold property values or, primarily, like a means of release, or like the coddling of a superstition.

Almost everywhere a church. It is ubiquitous. Traveling the continent, the train whistle announces another city or hamlet where human beings have huddled together for warmth of friendship, and there—wherever it may be on the cortex of this remote star called earth—a church! Whether in that clanging metropolis at the mouth of the Hudson or in some village of the Kansas plains, inevitably a spire pointing like some great finger to the sky. There, surely, is a portent. One pities the ignorance that can dismiss so vast a portent with a Freudian gesture.

The Old, Old Story

In the backwoods of northern Michigan one summer I heard singing issuing from a dilapidated barn. A week day, afternoon, religious praise from a remote barn! Like Moses I exclaimed, "Behold, I will turn aside and see this strange sight." So I turned in fisherman's rig—wearing fisherman's waders. And truly it was a church in a barn, the sect being called "The Saints of God." Surely an ambitious title! But why not? "A man's reach must exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" A sweet-faced woman asked me after a moment or two, "Do you love the Lord Christ?" "Yes," I answered, "and my only hope is that he loves me." "Would you tell us about him?" I would try! And so, once more, "the old, old story!" What if our creeds were different? Our creeds were only broken bits of colored glass; the same sunlight struck through

them all! The church is a portent, omnipresent, an inevitable blossoming of the human root.

Why the church? Let me tell you why! It is the sign of a deep hunger and the means whereby that hunger has at least partly been met. The Greek word for man is "anthropos"; it means "the upward looking creature." From the ugliness of life in factory and tenement we look up to a Beauty which ever haunts us. From the stains of life in remorse we look up, scarce daring to hope, to a Purity which will "not let us go." From our imperfect knowledge we look up to a Truth which ever beckons. We are born with this feeling for the Eternal. The Spirit which broods over us is living—living enough to constrain our living spirits. Yea, the Spirit who broods over us is personal. Not personal in any narrow and angular sense; not personal without any vast hinterland of mystery; not without heights we cannot scale and depths we cannot fathom! Yet personal—so as to hold in compassionate duress our personal life! How else could he have any dealings with us except he be one with us, as a sun's ray is one with all the mystery of light, as a drop of water is one, though infinitesimal, with all the tide-swayed ocean?

Why the church? It is the comradeship whereby we confess the age-long yearning, wherein we seek the age-long answer. It is the token of God in life. There we acknowledge the Everlasting who in many a talisman of the natural world has given us his message, who in successive generations of prophets has given us his messengers, who in Jesus—as a sure surmise of the soul confirmed in life well testifies—has given us—himself.

This main contention I now try to make more specific.

I

The church is a home in our loneliness. Life is lonely, and it is mysterious. Not that we always feel it so. Usually we are occupied with the surface of life; we have business to transact, a home to build, a pleasure to anticipate. But ever and again we are brought to attention, compelled to think not about the trappings of life but about life itself. Perhaps it is the lilt of an old song that arrests us, or the death of a friend, or a sunset glow. "And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears!" We strut our little day upon the rind of a planet, not knowing even if there are other souls on other planets whom we could call brother. A few years ago the planet Mars swept an inch nearer to us in its course—that relative inch being several million miles—and we peered at it intently hoping to see on that other swinging ball something that might have been fashioned by hands like our hands. We could not tell; but thus we confessed our loneliness in the vastness of space. Some Arm thrust us here out of eternity; some Voice bade us make our stab at the strange task of life. Or was it, not an Arm and a Voice, but only Happenstance? Soon this egg-shell of existence will crack, and we shall fall through into silence.

Is this earth a madhouse built by a demented mind? Or a cosmic machine catching and crushing us on its wheels? Or a school in which we are being trained? Or a penitentiary in which we are held before being led to the guillotine? "When I thought to know this it was too painful, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I." We enter a church. We breathe the word "God." We do not know all it means; we know little. But our nature—not at its weakest, but at its noblest and most sacrificing—kindles to it. We listen to the wisdom which other pilgrims have gathered from the journey: "The Eternal

George A. Buttrick

God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms." We hear Jesus say: "In my Father's house"—the most daring, the most lovely, the most redeeming description of the universe lips ever coined—and straightway the inborn faith comes to its own. We sing, then, with other souls as lonely as we and as burdened with the mystery:

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our Eternal Home.

The church has conquered our loneliness and made us friends with life.

II

Again, *the church is our armory in the conflict of high and low ideals.* That conflict was sharply drawn for Jean Valjean in the Victor Hugo novel. Escaped from convict service he had risen through the years

to become mayor of his community and almost its light and leading, his neighbors never dreaming there could have been a stigma on his early life. A doddering old man in a neighboring village is arrested as the long escaped Jean Valjean. There is between the two men an extraordinary facial resemblance. What shall the real Jean Valjean do? The other man is doddering, almost useless, and with but a few years to live. Valjean is sun and shield to all his neighbors. There is the conflict; all the plausibilities ranged on one side, and only a "still small voice" on the other. Not always is the issue so sharply drawn; but we face it. The young man faces it: the world's way of living has tangible rewards—the gay pleasure, the newspaper fame, the quick returns when methods are not too scrupulous; while the other way . . . who knows? Conscience may be only what the cynic calls it, a tribal custom! And, in any event, the gain for following conscience has been for most people only an inner wholeness, a central glow of nature. It is an unequal battle, isn't it?

We need the church, not as a coward needs a refuge, but as a traveler needs the water spring, yea, as a crusader needs his lance! In the church we understand—though we could not tell how, unless it be by the brooding of a Presence—that this intolerant ideal of duty, this beckoning of compassion, is our very life. Uproot it and all life's branches die, all life's blossoms wither. "What shall a man give in exchange for *himself?*" we hear Jesus say; and we understand why Jean Valjean, voluntarily returning to the galleys, should have said to someone who pitied him: "When I think of what I might have done I could almost pity myself." From the comradeship of the church we gain strength. At a lynching the crowd makes its individuals terrifically suggestible to evil, so that men do in that dark fellowship what they would not dream of doing in loneliness; in worship the congregation makes us savingly suggestible to good, so that we make nobler resolves than solitude could give. From the presence of Christ, who age after age "comes alive" when we think of him, we gain strength. The church gives us sinew for the strife.

III

Once more, *the church is the nucleus of human brotherhood.* We say it, and a church splintered into feuds belies us; but, even so, let us think it through. In that novel of a few years ago entitled "If Winter Comes" the hero Mark Sabre reaches a conviction concerning the wayward girl Effie. To help her will expose him to a misconstruction of his motives by dull or evil-minded neighbors; but he reasons as follows (speaking to a friend): "Here was a human creature come to us. You've got to respond! You're picked out! You! One human creature by another human creature. Breathing the same air. Sharing the same mortality. Responsible to the same God. If you've got a grain, a jot of humanity, you must, out of the very flesh and bones of you, respond to the cry of (one) made as you yourself are made."

But must you respond? Most people do not! Must you respond—to the Japanese? to the Russians? to someone with whom you could never agree on economic theory? to the claims of war-ridden Europe?

The earth is seamed with chasms. It is bitter with grudges, red with blood, and hollow with graves. And so few people take unto themselves the ministry of reconciliation." Where is the comradeship into which all may come? There's the church! It is tragically divided, but it is yet the only group which even dreams to say, "Whosoever will may come." It is the one social solvent. The labor union is not a social solvent, nor an employers' association; each in its own camp groups its own, each lays a sword across the face of the earth. A Masonic lodge, however fine, is not a social solvent; it has a secret at its heart. A luncheon club is not a social solvent; its mind—I speak in kindness—is rather notoriously standardized. A school is not a social solvent; it has limits of age and culture. But the church says of all men: "Breathing the same air. Sharing the same mortality." Then it goes deeper: "Responsible to the same God!" There is the reason why the church alone can be a social solvent: it builds its fellowship on the one, deep, common denominator of human life—the feeling for God! It welcomes people not as rich or poor, black or white, wise or blundering, stained or clean—but as "upward looking creatures"! It says to the world, as the Duke of Wellington said to the soldier who feared he might not kneel with his commander at the communion table: "My brother, we are all one here." No disarmament, however needed, will for long avail us until the heart itself is disarmed. The church, the place where people can kneel to pray "Our Father," is the one nucleus of human brotherhood. It must bridge its own chasms, for only through its united life can the chasms of the world be bridged.

IV

Yet again, *the church points us to a redeeming grace.* I shall not waste your time or mine by arguing that we need redemption. If you do not know it, it is unlikely that words of mine can fill a lack so fundamental; and, in any event, I am too conscious of my own sins to feel any liberty to talk with other people about their sins. It has seemed to me that, beyond all our psychological theorizings, old Dr. Johnson spoke the true word about our transgressions. A fussy lady, who had been rationalizing, asked him how he knew he was a sinner; and he answered, "Madam, a man knows it and that's enough." More than enough for most of us. This sense of a discord in us is axiomatic —beyond all argument because it is itself the basis of argument. Then how are sins to be forgiven? On the human level pardon is costly, and ever incomplete. How shall the world's sins be forgiven?

Almost everyone here has read or seen that play called "Green Pastures." It is a Negro's primitive conception of heaven, anthropomorphic to the nth degree! That play confronts the problem of sin, which all great drama and literature must face. How

shall God redeem his stubborn earth? He wipes out mankind except for one family in whom the virus of sin has not shown. That is one way of redemption! But the virus of sin begins to show in that one family; and now what? The play shows God hurling his thunderbolts; but the earth improves no whit. Meanwhile there has come to that skyey realm the strange prophet Hosea, who when his wife was unfaithful won her back not by blame or the recompense of evil but by silently absorbing her guilt into the suffering of his love. Hosea worried God: was that the way of redemption, for God and for men? As often as the shadow of Hosea crossed the white wall of God's office in heaven God was troubled. "That shadow again!" he would say to Gabriel. "Why don't you send him away, Lawd?" Gabriel would ask. But God could not send him away. Must God suffer? Must he in his secret agony of love absorb all man's black mistakes? In that play we see God's struggles —the knuckles white through the flesh, the fingernails biting into the palms of the clenched hands. Must God suffer? "Take the thunderbolts away! I see a man toiling on a lonely hill," he said. And from offstage comes the answer, as though all reverent humanity were speaking: "It's a terrible burden for one man to carry."

That sacrifice of Christ, in whom God by suffering reconciled the world unto himself, is the profoundest message of the church. It is in the last report the church's only message: in our kind of world there is nothing else greatly worth saying. But only the church explicitly says it—though from it all other words of saving grace are derived.

The church does nothing practical? Yes, it does. But, in any event, without the church practical life would choke us like dust.

I love thy church, O God;
Her walls before thee stand.
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand.
For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my toils and cares be given
Till toils and cares shall end.

A Prayer of Penitence

CHRIST of the market, and the Christmas flare,
Be not too much distressed
That still our greeds invest
Remembrance of Thee with such gaudy wear.

Thou knowest that between the Christmas days—
Slowly—how slowly, Lord!—
We move to more accord
With what Thou willest for our common ways.

Bear with us yet, Christ of the dispossessed!
Christ of the lowly born!
Until earth's every morn
Shall see Thy love in all our lives confessed.

ROBERT WHITAKER.

A Word with the Discouraged

BY ANDREW GILLIES

Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my reward with my God. Isaiah 45:4.

SOME time ago I read a little book entitled "Everybody's Lonesome." For the life of me I can't remember what it was all about, but its main point has stayed with me ever since. That point was that, at some time or other, everyone that lives is overcome with a feeling of loneliness. At various times and in varying degrees we are all oppressed with the feeling that life is at bottom a solitary experience, a something which even those nearest and dearest cannot share with us.

I wonder if a companion volume might not be written entitled "Everybody's Discouraged," a volume to stress the fact that there are times when the whole business of trying to live and live nobly becomes a discouraging affair. We have undertaken a certain task and put all there was of us into the doing of it, only to feel at last that we have miserably failed. Or we have set for ourselves certain moral and spiritual ideals, certain exalted standards of living; we have started out determined to attain them; only to find at the end of life that they are hemispheres away.

"What's the Use?"

On the other hand, there are other times when our discouragement has been caused, not by ourselves, but by others. We have tried to play the game of life fairly and squarely, to deal justly by our fellowmen, only to be bitterly disappointed by the reception given our efforts. We have seen honest work unappreciated and trickery applauded; square-dealing resulting in loss and chicanery liberally rewarded. We have seemed to lose out while unprincipled men have seemed to win. And so we have ended by asking ourselves the question, "Oh, what's the use?" At still other times the cause of our discouragement is life itself. It is not this or that particular experience, but the experience of life as a whole. It is all so bewildering, so disappointing at times, so filled with mystery and frustration.

Now the worst thing about such discouragement is its moral and spiritual effects. It is what that state of mind does to the individual who experiences it. A permanently discouraged man is a beaten man. He is a moral and spiritual down-and-outer, incapable of seeing clearly, unfitted to cope with life and its multitudinous problems.

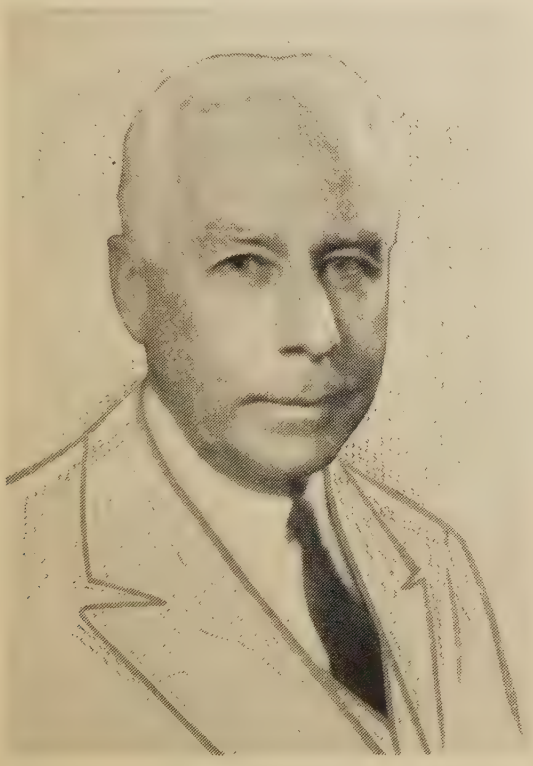
The word discouraged means exactly what you would expect it to mean, from its derivation. It means robbed of courage, bereft of one of the qualities without which achievement and victory in life's con-

flicts are absolutely impossible. To be discouraged is to be disheartened; it is to lose confidence in life, in one's self, in others, in God, in everything. It is to go down to defeat.

What's the Answer?

But if all that is true, what is the way out? What is the cure for the mental and spiritual disease? In modern parlance, what's the answer? And the answer it, first of all, that the complete answer is neither simple nor easy. The causes of moral and spiritual discouragement are many and varied.

Some of them are physical. Depleted vitality and frayed nerves often enter into the situation. Many men think they are cynical when they are only tired. Like Elijah of old, they have fought a good fight; they have done a good work; but the doing of it has left



Andrew Gillies

them exhausted, and they think they want to die. They lie down under a juniper tree and think the whole world has gone bad. And of course the cure for that particular malady is a rebuilding of body and nerves. It is a revitalizing of the physical man, with its inevitable reaction upon mind and spirit.

Some other causes of discouragement are purely mental. They are the result of coming to feel that no other being that ever lived ever had such a time as we are having; no one was ever so unappreciated; no one was ever so abused by circumstances; no one ever had such a hard row to hoe. And of course the remedy for that is the commonest of common sense. It is the recognition of the fact that the best men that ever lived have had the hardest times. It is the realization that life never has been and never will be easy—that it is a fight clear to the end, and that the whiner and the complainer, the man filled with self-pity, will never rise above his discouragement until he learns to think straight and see whole.

May I add one other statement to this preliminary phase of our discussion? May I say that there is nothing wholesome or helpful in consoling ourselves with the fact that, whatever our troubles or difficulties, there are other people who have worse; there are others who have suffered greater calamities, been treated more cruelly by this hard world?

I have never believed in that method of encouragement, and I never will. When I lay on my back in a sanitarium for nine ghastly months, looking up, not at the stars, but at the ceiling, it didn't comfort me a particle to find some who had lain on their backs for years. When I was incapacitated for seven long years, silent and sick at heart, it didn't cheer me up to know that some men I knew had been incapacitated for ten. And if I broke my leg today I wouldn't be helped by knowing that some dear friend had broken his neck.

No, no, my friends, however much we may seek to justify such reasoning, it is neither sound nor wholesome. We do not emerge from mental depression by comparing our plight with the plight of others. We come out of it by seeing life itself more clearly, by revaluating life's values, by committing ourselves to a definite course of action and then taking with unflinching faith whatever may come.

For instance, when we know our facts and understand their significance, we see that life's deepest and most lasting satisfactions spring not from earthly rewards or the praises of men, but from the consciousness of work well done and life nobly lived.

The Joy of Achievement

It is good to be appreciated. A man would be a fool to say it isn't. And it would be a glorious thing if every man found his place and was amply and adequately rewarded for the work which he did. But the fact is that countless thousands of maladjustments exist, of men and women without the opportunity to make the largest possible contributions to life, that countless millions never receive what they should for what they do, and that the best things ever done for mankind never were appreciated or adequately paid for at all.

The best things that have been done in every realm of human endeavor—in art, architecture, music, scientific experimentation, yes, in industry, civic life and religious leadership—have been done not for reward at all, but for the unutterable joy of doing it. They have been done in response to the creative urge, the love of truth, the passion for human good, or to that which was believed to be the will of Almighty God. Moreover, much of it has been done in the face of public indifference, of violent opposition and even of persecution and death itself. And yet I doubt if one of those contributors to the priceless possessions of the race would exchange places with the most richly rewarded scoundrel that ever scuttled a business competitor or filched a fat salary from the public treasury.

A visitor climbed one day to the roof of a cathedral in process of building. There he found a workman pounding away at an obscure and unobserved task. He watched and saw that the silent workman was using meticulous care in what he did.

"Why do you do that?" he asked. "No one will ever see it."

"Perhaps not," replied the workman, "but I will."

Now, that is the spirit which has given the world its best, which has made a priceless contribution to the real riches of humanity and has given to both the humble and the great the courage to press on to the end and unutterable joy when life was done.

And in that spirit, one of the finest things in all modern life is being done. I did not see the Passion Play at Oberammergau, but I wish I had. Those who did tell me that it was one of the most beautiful, most impressive, most gripping things they have ever known in life. Whatever incidental criticism may be made upon it, whatever impression certain elements in it may make upon certain races, the fact remains that it stands out as one of the most sublimely spiritual and inspiring things in this weary and disillusioned world. And do you know why?

Let me tell you. That spectacle is produced not by Hollywood stars but by wholesome, simple-minded people. It is put on, not by moving picture magnates, in order to make a million dollars, but by the people of a Bavarian village to maintain a sacred tradition and carry on a holy enterprise. It is the product, not of the acquisitive instinct but of the simple faith and whole-hearted devotion of believing peasants. It ran the better part of five months. The performances were eight hours in length and seventy of them were given. Before that there were long months of preparation for it.

And what did they get for their labor, in the coin of the realm? The leading actors received less than $2,000, the more poorly paid, $75—about as much as some individuals spend on a trip and less than some others spend on a dinner-dance.

Oh, can't you see blazing out of it all the vital, the tremendous truth? The supreme joy of those who share in that work is not the thrill of material reward. It is not the praise of the public, the satisfied ego. It is the unutterable joy of doing something that is worth the doing, of making some slight contribution to the sum total of humanity's real riches, of leaving the whole human situation a little better than they found it.

Great Deeds Done by "Failures"

Observe also, if you will, that the greatest contributions to human good have been made, not by men who have succeeded but by men who failed. They have been made, first, by men and women who, in their innermost hearts, have been keenly conscious of their own personal shortcomings, of the futility of their struggles to attain their personal ideals.

A few years ago a British scholar and religious leader lay on his bed while his life ebbed away. He was through, so far as this earth was concerned. His life was lived, his task finished. He had been, as was universally felt, a genuine Christian saint. His unselfish and kindly spirit had been the inspiration of multitudes. His work in the field of oriental scholarship had been enormous. And yet, when a friend slipped in to see him and tried to tell him what a saint he had been, he lifted his hand and said, "Don't say that. I'm a sinner looking to God for mercy."

Exactly so. The world knew of his achievements, of his victories, of his ultimate attainments. He knew how far short he had fallen from what he longed to be. He knew of the inner conflicts with the lower self, fighting for supremacy; of the days when he had miserably failed to be the man he wanted to be; of the long years of weary struggle necessary to arrive at the point he had reached; of the unattained and unattainable ideals which haunted his soul even in the hour of the dissolution of body and spirit. And knowing all that he laid no claim to the title of saint.

And that, in broad outline at least, is the story of every man but One that ever walked the earth. We have what is sometimes called the mucker school of biography. We have a group of moderns who in their delineation of history's heroic souls take delight in trying to show that they were not heroic at all. And they do carry it too far. In trying to show that all our human idols have feet of clay, they give the impression that those idols were nothing but clay, that Franklin was an amorous old fool, Washington was an aristocratic rake, and Lincoln a purveyor of smutty stories.

Triumphs of the Broken-Hearted

But thank God that, with all their excesses, they have done us poor, struggling mortals a good turn. They have shown that we all make our failures, we all fall about so many times in our long, weary climb up life's hill, that in the noblest lives ever lived on earth, with that one astounding exception, there are mistakes and shortcomings to regret, sins to repent of, failures to mourn.

More than that, however, and of great importance: Has it ever occurred to you that all that is fine and pure and wise and of value in human life has been put there by men almost every one of whom died broken-hearted at his failure to attain his goal, to get the thing done which he started out to do?

It is said that the Earl of Shaftsbury did more than any other man in England's long history to free the children of the poor from exploitation by the avaricious and unscrupulous. Did you know that the Earl of Shaftsbury toiled and fought for seventeen years before the parliament passed a law limiting the labor of children in factories to ten hours a day, and thirty years more to overcome the opposition of employers and make the law effective?

It has been said again and again that John Woolman, a simple Quaker, did more than any other man to free the English speaking people from the curse of slavery. And he did; there is no doubt about it. But do you know that, when John Woolman died, crying to God to free the black man, the first one of the real results of his work had not been brought about? Not

until eight years later did his own communion, the Quaker church, in the colonies, denounce slavery as a crime against humanity and forbid slaveholders membership among them.

Oh yes, and Moses, the immortal leader of the children of Israel, died alone at the edge of the Promised Land to which he had brought his people. And Abraham Lincoln, whose whole soul cried out for national unity and the healing of the open sore which threatened our future, went down to death from an assassin's bullet while dissension was still rife and sectional hatred cried out for revenge.

And Jesus, the lover of all mankind, the God-filled founder of the kingdom of God, the only being that ever walked the earth who ever dared proclaim a world of human brotherhood and love, received what for his pains? He was denied, betrayed, abandoned by his closest friends, jeered at by the mob, ridiculed by Rome's soldiers, led out through Jerusalem's yelling hordes and nailed to a tree.

Discouraged? Of course you get discouraged. Every one who ever lived and tried to live nobly and do anything worth while has gone again and again into the depths. But remember this, if you forget all else. The man who sins and falls short of his ideal is not the man who fails. The man who fails to attain his ends is not the man who fails. We have all sinned and come short. "If our sins were written on our foreheads, we would all wear our hats over our eyes."

The greatest leaders this old world has ever known have been leaders of seemingly lost causes. But those men are not failures. Every bit of work honestly done and every life honestly lived has permanent value for the race. "When a man loves the right so strongly that he counts his life of no importance his example becomes omnipotent."

The only man who fails is the man who quits; the man who yields to discouragement and gives up the fight. He is the man who throws up his hands, turns his back upon the struggle and permits himself to doubt God's goodness, the value of right doing and noble living.

Undying Faith in God's Goodness

And that brings us to the final and greatest cure for discouragement. I mean unwearied, undying, uncon-

A Christmas Prayer

By George A. Campbell

OUR Father who art in heaven, we would talk with Thee, with Thee alone. Wilt Thou not talk with us as friend to friend? We feel our deep need of fellowship with Thee, who art ever seeking to woo us to Thy heart of love.

We approach Thy throne of grace in humility and repentance. We have lost our way. In our prosperity we forgot the spiritual values. The stain of sin is upon us. We had forgotten to pray and to look up. We were satisfied with things. But we have been shaken. Fear is in our hearts. Conceit has deceived us. We cry out for the living God.

Come Thou and be to us a cleansing fire, so that we may be pure in heart and see Thee. Forgive us our sins, that we may begin anew to build more stately mansions for the soul. Grant that we may not be driven to Thee simply in our desperation; but rather that we may be drawn to Thee by our love of Thee.

We hear the whisperings of God in the cry of the Babe of Bethlehem. Heaven bends to earth. The Son of God takes upon Himself the flesh of man. Deep speaks unto deep—the deep of heaven's love to the deep of human needs. Oh, how we thank Thee for the gift of Thy Son! He has brought meaning to our lives, warmth to our hearts, vision to our eyes, power to our wills, peace to our souls. We can never cease to wonder that He is ours and that we are His. He is our guide, our hope, our friend, our Savior.

To all of us there sounds today the herald angels' song, "Peace on earth, good will among men." Hope bursts in our hearts with that song! But what smiting of conscience, also! We have disappointed Thee, the God of Peace. Our world bristles with war. All nations, even those named Christian, go forth to kill. The demon War is even in our hearts. We have given Thee only lip service. Our competitive industry is but ruthless war! Millions are maimed; other millions find no work for their hands. Our hearts are heavy, our eyes are dim, our minds are confused. We come to Thee for wisdom. Only Thou canst remake our world. Our hope is in Thee. Direct Thy church in wisdom and courage. Raise up statesmen who can point the way and lead the nations to walk therein. Give to employers a clear vision. Give to men who labor a love of Christ, the Carpenter. May Thy ever pervading Spirit imbue us all with a kindly mind.

Dear Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and of all mankind, Thou knowest that many among us doubt Thy care, indeed deny that Thou art. To them this world is without purpose or outcome. Bethlehem is a children's story. To them we are brutes whose path of darkness ends in the grave.

But how can we be heroic if life be empty of purpose? Thou Infinite Wisdom, look upon Thy world and in Thy patient love—delay not too long!—banish our confusion, cast out cynicism and demonstrate Thy purpose and providence, so that denial will give way to affirmation, doubt to faith, hesitation to action, lamentation to songs of victory.

Thus undergirding our lives with faith, we shall go forth with prayer and praise to extend the Christmas spirit of good will to all nations and peoples, and to build in Christ's blessed name His kingdom of love, Amen.

querable faith in God's justice and goodness and in the final victory for the right.

In his essay on Compensation, Emerson sneers at the kind of religion which encourages people to bear the vicissitudes of this life by the specious promise of a good time in the next life. He rises to the heights in vitriolic denunciation of the men in the pulpit who preach such a gospel. And Emerson was right. Such a conception of religion is destructive of all good.

Jesus Christ never taught any such thing. He never preached any stupid and silly so-called gospel. What he did say is that God and the good life are omnipotent; that love is stronger than hate, that right-doing and noble living, no matter how amazing their seeming failure, will win in the end in the struggle for a new world.

Did Jesus feel sorry for himself when he trod the weary way to Calvary? Did he lose confidence in the ultimate victory of his cause? Was he turned, by all that he suffered, into a cynic, a pessimist, a misanthrope? Not for a minute. Facing it all with imperturbable calmness, he said to the little, trembling group: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

When Latimer and Ridley were burned at the stake in the square at Oxford, and their hopes seemed blasted and their efforts come to naught, did they pity themselves and give up the struggle? Not for a moment. Looking over at his companion in death, the bishop said, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace as, I trust, shall never be put out."

"Hope Thou in God"

One of the writers of the Psalms came to what seems to have been an impasse. Just what it was I do not know, but I do know that he struck the depths of discouragement. And his sole answer was the triumphant cry, as of his inner self: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God."

Out of persecution indescribable and sufferings beyond our imagination Paul the apostle wrote those words which I have read to you: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, yet not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

And over there in India is a little man, weak, sick and growing old; a little man who for years has been fighting the battle of human rights with just one weapon, and that is patient, uncomplaining non-resistance. There he is, but not discouraged, saying again and again—"We will win in the end; right will triumph over wrong."

There is your cure for discouragement, my friends, because there is your key to life. Unwearied, indestructible, undying faith in a good God, in the fact that it is right to do right, and in the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Holding to that in every situation, under circumstances most disheartening, we are enabled not only to endure and go on with life's tasks, but to work joyously and live victoriously.

Bread

By Holland F. Burr

He was known of them in the breaking of the bread. *Luke* 24:35.

TWO sights I have seen this year that I never expected to see. I have seen bread for sale in the markets at four cents for a twenty-four ounce loaf. And within half a mile of this church I have seen some scores of men and women crowding in to get stale bread free. Sixteen thousand loaves were distributed from one center almost within the shadow of the church within a few weeks.

I

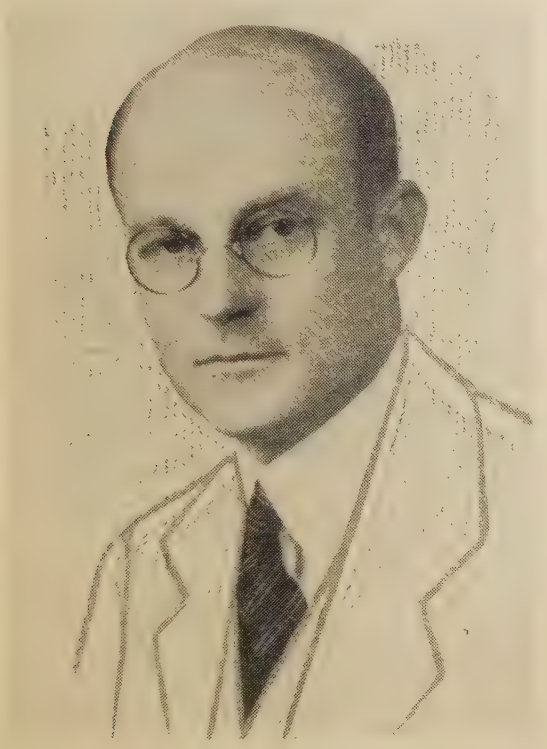
There is a sacramental meaning in the eating of bread. In the very act we are taking the strength of other men's bodies into our own bodies that our strength may be increased. Bread is concentrated energy from the bodies and brains of men put into convenient form for us to use. To be sure, the energy from human sources is mingled with energy from the sun, the rain, the soil. The verse the children learned in their vacation school is right:

> Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
> Back of the flour the mill;
> Back of the mill the wheat, the shower,
> The sun, and our Father's will.

God's processes are in the loaf. And nature's gifts. But they would not be there in this form available for our use, if it were not for the purposeful activity of men. There was a deliberate purpose in the heart of some particular individual that led the man to plow the ground and plant the seed to yield the wheat that was in the slice of toast on your breakfast table this morning. Hope and patience and watchfulness were there all through the long weeks of growth. Then there was the hot labor of the harvest, the sweat of men who stored the grain, the busy toil of men in the milling and baking and selling. All this was in the loaf before it was delivered to your home.

The other morning, sitting at my table, I tried to visualize the people who had produced the slice of bread from which I was eating. Bronzed men of the fields, men choked with the dust of the milling, men laboring before heated ovens. Would I recognize them as my brothers if I should meet them—these men whose strength, whose very life-blood, was even then being poured into my body? There were men engaged in transportation—truck drivers, locomotive engineers and firemen, trainmen, flagmen, dispatchers. If I should meet them, would they be my brothers? There were people concerned with accounts, bookkeepers bending over desks in offices. There were those who direct the processes of modern business, the executives of all the companies that handled the wheat through the long series of transformations between farm and table. Back of them were the inventors

whose brains had devised the machinery for harvesting and milling and baking, the inventors of the steam locomotive and the gasoline motor. There were the men engaged in manufacturing machinery, who had made all the equipment that was being used. There were the bankers who financed the handling of the crop. There were the legitimate investors. There were the speculators who had hoped to win advantage through fluctuations in the market. There were the manipulators of wheat, who would willingly force quotations up or down for the sake of making their ill-gotten gains. Would I recognize all these if I



Holland F. Burr

should meet them? Would I be able to call them all brothers?

I realized as I sat there at the table that I was the center of a web of human relationships reaching out in ever-widening circles around me. All these persons through this loaf were pouring their lives into my life. Eating bread, I was sharing in a sacrament. I was one with humanity. With humanity in all its aspects, whether richer or poorer, whether better or worse, in the sickness and health of its corporate life, I was made one in the sacrament of the bread.

II

Of course I had paid for my loaf. From the standpoint of business that had completed the transaction, and I was at liberty to do with my own property as I chose. For an agreed price I had taken the strength of others, and now their strength was mine. But what had I paid? Four cents! How much, I wondered, does the farmer get of that? How much does the miller get? How much does the baker get? What part of that four cents does the merchant retain as his share? Just how much, out of four cents, goes to the clerk who waited on me? Or to the locomotive engineer, or any one of all that mingled throng of those who had shared in bringing me my bread? Could I truthfully say that I had paid? Might I indeed do with my purchase as I pleased?

I could not get out of my mind that hungry crowd of men and women almost within the shadow of the church, coming for their hand-out of stale bread. Why could they not buy it as I had, like self-respecting citizens in this "nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"? I could not get the four cents out of my mind, the penny change I had received back from my nickel. Had I betrayed my fellows, eating my bread at such a price?

I know about the merchant. I can understand his policies. He had given me a penny just as truly as if he had called to me, "Here! A reward for trading at my store."

I do not know the farmer. But I know something of the farmer's plight. Years of profitless labor. An increasing burden of debt. Tax sales and foreclosures. I could not get out of my mind that group of farmers who met recently in a room in a courthouse at a county seat in northwestern Iowa. On the bulletin board downstairs were the announcements of twenty-five sheriff's sales advertising a quarter of a million dollars' worth of farm lands and farm homes to be sold for debt and taxes. Since December over three hundred parcels in the county had been sold that way. The county agent said that before the year was out over half the land in the county would have changed hands. One farm that carried a mortgage of ninety dollars an acre had just sold for forty dollars. The farmer, like the merchant, had given me a penny just as truly as if he had laid it in my hand.

I do not know the miller. Probably he is not a man at all, but a huge corporation with hired management put there to get profits for the stockholders. Probably the stockholders, like most absentee owners, are quite divorced from felt responsibility. Their interest is in their dividends and in keeping up the value of their stock. Perhaps values have dropped for them too. Perhaps their profits have been stopped.

I could not get out of my mind the man who manipulates the market, getting by cleverness—not work, not honest toil—more than a man can make by labor in a lifetime. Producing nothing, he has gotten more than his share of the loaf.

The penniless farmer, the producer; the penniless unemployed, the consumer; and in between these others, some giving more than they received, some receiving more than they gave—I could not get them out of my mind as I sat there at my table. And in my pocket was the penny still. And in my mouth was bread.

Here is no sacrament! What right have I to take the bread unless I am prepared to render some account of the use I shall make of it? What right have I to feed upon the strength of other men unless my added

strength is used for them and for their cause? It is not enough that I have paid for my bread. This is a hollow sacrament, futile, a sacrament of sin!—unless with the sacrament I am ready to engage in a covenant with all these men to whom I am bound by such indissoluble and inevitable ties.

And what shall be the covenant of the bread?

III

We have witnessed the collapse of an order in which the principles of Christ have not prevailed. We have been living under conditions where the interests of men have been in conflict and each has tried to grab for himself what he could. Our day has been characterized by tremendous wealth and tremendous power concentrated in the hands of a few. Think of two per cent of the people in America owning sixty per cent of the accumulated wealth, while thirty-three per cent of the people own thirty-five per cent of the wealth, and sixty-five per cent of the people own only five per cent of the wealth. Think of twenty-nine one-hundredths of one per cent of the population in a certain recent year paying over ninety-five per cent of the individual income tax. And as to power, the pyramiding of control through holding companies and interlocking directorates and various devices made it possible for Mr. James W. Gerard to declare that sixty-four men were the real rulers of America, and to name the men. On the other side of the picture, we have talked of opportunity for all and put nine million people out of work. With warehouses full of foodstuffs we cannot sell, millions go hungry and cannot buy. Buying power has been withheld from the masses, preventing them from purchasing what they could produce, until the whole equilibrium between supply and demand has broken down. Under such conditions there can be no rational balance between the possibilities of production and of purchase. Say what you will about natural inequalities between man and man. Compare American standards of living as you will with standards elsewhere. Our order has been an order based in inequity. We have been living in a pagan world, and paganism has brought its own inevitable results.

Doubtless we shall climb out of the morass we now are in. Perhaps already we have begun to climb. But up to what are we climbing? Back to paganism and prosperity once more? Back to the rule of grab? Back to inequity? Will the new status mean only an ever-widening cleavage between the many and the few?

It is possible for us to have a better world. It is possible for a new status to be established in which men's interests shall not be so much in conflict; in which there shall be more of cooperation, less of competition. It is possible for us to have an order in which the gross inequities of the past shall be done away. We shall not bring in perfection in a moment, nor ever in this human world. But much is possible that we do not have today; peacefully possible, let us hope.

Yet only possible if you and I and others like ourselves become aroused, intelligent, purposeful, active. You and I, and people like us, are the ones who must find the way. You and I, and others like us, are the ones who must lead the way. Those who sincerely mean to follow Jesus are the ones on whom the responsibility falls.

And if we find it not, then either in our time or our children's another collapse must inevitably follow, more desperate than that through which we are passing now—unless war intervenes and brings our civilization before then to its bloody doom.

IV

This, then, is the covenant of the bread: I have taken the strength of others to make strong my body and my mind. I now must consecrate my strength for the sake of these my brothers. I must consecrate myself to labor that a better day may come for all. Daily as I eat my bread I am brought, whether I will or no, into a sacrament of unity with my brothers. There is an implied covenant in the act. But only when the covenant of the bread is carried out in life does the sacrament become complete.

Christmas Verse

Noel! Noel!

OH Christmas, that your Gift of Gifts might be
Amongst us yet! as once in Galilee—
Telling of lilies, and of birds overhead—
Of little children and our daily bread—
To us, His humble fisher-folk! make plain
The shining wonder of Himself again,
That we may touch the seamless garment's rim
And be made whole, through the dear grace of Him!
Across the centuries that seem so far—
How close the Christ Child comes! how near the Star!

LAURA SIMMONS.

Star of Bethlehem

O STAR that led the Wise Men from the East,
Shine on our revels—sanctify our feast!

They sought the Prince of Peace: we seek Him, too:
But not with myrrh and frankincense—with rue,

The Flower of Repentance, meet for those
Who saw the Light and yet the Darkness chose.

Though sometimes it may wax and sometimes wane,
Yet beams that Star—yet beckons us again;

Eternal challenge to the mystic Quest
For Peace, which till he find, man cannot rest.

And it shall shine until its task be done,
With all men Brothers, and all nations one.

Shine on our revels—sanctify our feast,
O Star that led the Wise Men from the East!

FLORENCE VAN CLEVE.

INDEX — 1932

Sermons

Ainslie, Peter: "The Pain of Thinking"(June)
Ashworth, Robert A.: "A Song of God's Statutes" (July)

Beach, King D.: "Following the Vision Beautiful" (April)
Beaven, Albert W.: "God in the Daily Life" (August)
Brooks, William E.: "Youth and the New World" (May)
Brummitt, Dan B.: "Tales Told by the Tourists" (July)
Bryan, Dawson C.: "Men Like Mountains" (Feb.)
Burr, Holland F.: "Bread" (Dec.)
Buttrick, George A.: "The Challenge of Pain" (March); "Why the Church?" (Dec.)

Campbell, Roy H.: "Three Questions That Must Be Answered" (August)
Chalmers, Allan Knight: "Individualism—With a Difference" (April)
Clinchy, Russell J.: "How Jesus Shared His Religion" (May)
Coe, Albert Buckner: "Life Takes a Holiday" (April)
Coffin, Henry Sloane: "All the Saints Salute You" (Jan.)
Creighton, W. B.: "Getting God Into Our Scheme of Things" (July)
Cremeans, Walter R.: "A Platform for a Christian America" (Nov.)

Day, Albert Edward: "Which Way America?" (Nov.)

Eastman, Fred: "The Spirit of God and the Present Chaos" (Feb.)
Errett, Edwin R.: "I Pray Not for the World" (July)
Ewers, John Ray: "Your Name" (Sept.)

Fitt, Frank: "The Meaning of Mother's Day" (May)
Fosdick, Harry Emerson: "Sidestepping Our Responsibility" (Jan.)

Gilkey, James Gordon: "Conquering Self-Distrust" (August)
Gillies, Andrew: "A Word to the Discouraged" (Dec.)
Gilroy, William E.: "Where Love Begins" (July)
Godbold, Albea: "Hard Times and Soft Thinking" (June)
Gouwens, Teunis E.: "Unstable Souls" (August)

Holmes, John Haynes: "The Unknown Soldier Speaks" (May)
Homrighausen, E. G.: "Repent Ye!" (Oct.)
Hughes, Holt: "Playing God" (May)

Jenkins, Burris: "Thanksgiving and the Depression" (Nov.)
Jones, Edgar DeWitt: "Washington the Valerous" (Feb.)
Jordan, Orvis F.: "Dives and Lazarus in 1932" (Sept.)

Kerr, Hugh Thomson: "Losing All He Still Could Sing!" (Feb.)
Kimball, Harry W.: "Man's Adventure with the Divine" (June)
Kirk, Harris E.: "Listening to God" (Oct.)

Leinbach, Paul S.: "Iron Bars" (July)
Lewis, Edwin: "God and Man" (April)
Luccock, Halford E.: ". . . . Shall Be Damned" (Jan.)

Macartney, Clarence E.: "Rock or Sand" (June)
MacCallum, J. A.: "Why We Suffer" (Aug.)
Merrill, Boynton: "Men of Violence" (Nov.)
Merrill, William Pierson: "Breaking Down the Walls" (Nov.)
Moore, W. E.: "Let the Eighteenth Amendment Stand!" (Sept.)
McKay, Claude Allen: "A Nameless Quartet" (Aug.)

Newton, Joseph Fort: "The Great Expectation" (April)

Palmer, Albert W.: "Are We Victims of Hereditiy" (April)
Parker, Fletcher D.: "The Price of Immortality" (March)
Parsons, Edward L.: "The Word Became Flesh" (December)
Phillips, Harold C.: "The Master Builder" (Sept.)

Reccord, Augustus P.: "A Challenge to America" (Oct.)
Rice, Merton S.: "Revive Thy Work!" (Oct.)
Richards, James A.: "Strong Drink" (Oct.)
Robbins, Howard Chandler: "A Lodging Place of Wayfaring Men" (Sept.)
Roberts, Richard: "Keeping Christmas in the Heart" (December)
Roberts, Thomas B.: "Faith for the Hour of Storm" (Feb.)
Rogers, Warren L.: "Easter! The Proclamation of a Great Faith" (March)
Ross, G. A. Johnston: "Beginning With Jesus" (Jan.)

Schaeffer, Charles E.: "A Faith That Never Fails" (Sept.)
Scherer, Paul: "The Noise in the Camp" (March)
Sherrill, Henry Knox: "Today's Call to the Church" (Jan.)
Snowden, James H.: "The Ministry of Silence" (July)
Sockman, Ralph W.: "Mastering the Inevitables" (Feb.)
Stauffacher, Albert D.: "Who Crucified Jesus?" (March)
Stewart, George Craig: "The Inevitables of Easter" (March)
Stocking, Jay T.: "The Abiding Warrant for Christian Worship" (June)
Stuber, Stanley I.: "Vision—Maker of Men and Nations" (June)

Thayer, Earl H.: "The Magna Charta of the New Race" (May)
Tittle, Ernest Fremont: "A World That Cannot Be Shaken" (Jan.); "Coming, a New Religious Movement!" (Nov.)

Versteeg, John M.: "Cross-Crowned Calvary" (March)

Wheaton, Francis C.: "Good News—Not Advice" (December)
Wright, Bruce S.: "Jesus Sits by the Treasury" (Oct.)

Pastoral Prayers

Campbell, George A. (December)
Ferris, Frank H. (February)
Fosdick, Harry Emerson (August)
Holman, Charles T. (September)
Lemon, W. P. (May)
Morrison, Charles Clayton (July)
Norwood, Frederick W. (June)
Petty, A. Ray (March)
Reissig, Herman F. (October)
Stewart, George (April)
Tomkins, Floyd W. (January)
Willett, Herbert L. (November)

Preacher Problems

Boddy, William H.: "Promoting Friendliness in a City Church" (April)
Boynton, M. Russell: "Must Church Finance be a 'Burden'?" (May)
Bradley, Dwight: "Can a Minister Keep the Amateur Spirit?" (December)
Day, Albert Edward: "By Beds of Pain" (January)
Jenkins, Burris: "This 'Foolishness of Preaching'" (July)
Myers, Johnston: "The Church Must Feed the Hungry" (October)
Peabody, Francis G.: "The Significance of the Pastoral Prayer" (September)
Richards, James A.: "Church Music That is Prayer" (March)
Smith, Roy L.: "Making Assistant Pastors Out of Laymen" (June)
Vance, James I.: "Putting My Church Men to Work" (February)
Versteeg, John M.: "The Pastor and Religious Education (November)
Vichert, John F.: "Some Secrets of Power in Preaching" (August)

Book of the Month

Andrews, C. F.: What I Owe to Christ (September)
Beales, A. C. F.: The History of Peace (May)
Edwards, Jonathan, by Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr. (April)
Fisher, Frederick B.: That Strange Little Brown Man; Gandhi (August)
Grace in the New Testament, by James Moffat (January)
He Whom a Dream Hath Possessed, by John Knox (June)
History of Peace, The, by A. C. F. Beales (May)
Jesus After Nineteen Centuries, by Ernest Fremont Tittle (October)
Jew Through the Centuries, The, by Herbert L. Willett (July)
Knox, John: He Whom a Dream Hath Possessed (June)
Moffat, James: Grace in the New Testament (January)
Moral Freedom and the Christian Faith, by Cyril H. Valentine (November)
McGiffert, Jr., Arthur Cushman: Jonathan Edwards (April)
Rauschenbusch, Walter: A Theology for the Social Gospel (March)
Re-Thinking Misions, by the Laymen's Inquiry (December)
Sinclair, Upton: The Wet Parade (February)
That Strange Little Brown Man: Gandhi, by Frederick B. Fisher (August)
Theology for the Social Gospel, A, by Walter Rauschenbusch (March)
Tittle, Ernest Fremont: Jesus After Nineteen Centuries (October)
Wet Parade, The, by Upton Sinclair (February)
What I Owe to Christ, by C. F. Andrews (September)
Willett, Herbert L.: The Jew Through the Centuries (July)

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Can a Minister Keep the Amateur Spirit?

By Dwight Bradley

AFTER nearly twenty years in the ministry I am inclined to believe that a preacher's hardest problem is to keep his amateur spirit. What do I mean by this? Simply that as we grow professionally more seasoned and more sophisticated, we seem to lose that zest of enthusiasm which we had when we started out.

According to the dictionary an amateur is "one who practices an art, especially a fine art, not as a livelihood or professionally, but for the love of it." The word is derived from the Latin "amator," which means "lover." Thus, a man with an amateur spirit is one whose profession is to him a fine art which he practices as a lover.

This, I am sure, is what all of us wanted and expected to be when we stood up to receive ordination: men whose profession is to them a fine art which they practice as lovers. But with the passage of years and the accumulation of experience we realize more and more clearly that to mature and at the same time maintain our youthful attitude is a tremendously difficult matter. Sometimes, in fact, we try to persuade ourselves that the loss is made up for by our growing wisdom. But we are never quite able to convince ourselves of this. It is nothing more than a lame excuse; and when we are forced to admit that the old spirit has gone, we know in our hearts that we are beaten, no matter how successful we may outwardly appear to be.

I have found that there are certain specific things that seem especially inimical to the maintenance of the amateur spirit; and because a discussion like this must be more or less autobiographical, I shall tender due apologies and proceed in the first person singular. The enemies which I have in mind are five in number: namely, Routine; Economic Pressure; Institutionalism; Discouragement; Self-satisfaction.

Let us take them, one by one, and see what can be done to overcome them.

• *Routine as An Enemy*

There are some things that make miserable task-masters but fine servants. Routine is one of them. It will tyrannize over us if we let it. We can use it for our own purposes if we will.

I played baseball when I was a youngster and was ambitious to be a great pitcher. So, I used to go over to the gymnasium and "warm up" in the "cage" all winter—several hours a day. I would try for perfect control, throw curves, work on a slow ball, and lob the ball back and forth with the catcher in order to get my muscles in shape for the season. It was the most laborious kind of routine. Yet I liked it. When spring came I was out on the field for the first practice and kept right at the

Dwight Bradley

business of being a pitcher all summer. This I did year after year until I had developed as far as my native ability would let me go. My love of the game and my ambition to excel in it provided the motive. I enjoyed the routine because I knew that it was the only way to become an expert pitcher.

Suppose now that someone had ordered me to spend all those hours in baseball practice; I would have resented it and would probably have rebelled. Or suppose I had wanted to play basket-ball or tennis, or golf, and had been forced to take up baseball instead. It would be hard to imagine any worse punishment than this. A game must be played for the love of it, for otherwise it is mere painful drudgery.

Well—I have tried to have the same attitude toward my ministry that I had towards baseball. Not that I regard preaching as a game. Far from it. But I do regard it as an art; and the spirit of a real artist is very similar to that of a man who plays a game for the sheer love of it.

For this reason, I have looked at the routine of my ministry a good deal as I looked at the routine of baseball practice. It is part of my work. I love my profession and I want to excel in it. I know that what little native ability I have will lie idle unless I develop it by hard and persistent effort. Routine is nothing but effort expended in an orderly way. So I keep my amateur spirit by reminding myself of this whenever I am tired and "fed up." I say to myself, "Look here, old man! You may despise this treadmill now, but remember that it's the way to be a good minister." Then I take a few hours off to get rested. Next day I am back in the grind with the old spirit running in me as strongly as ever.

• *The Problem of Economic Pressure*

This is a serious obstacle. When we have reached the point where our ministry is a job and we have our salaries in mind whenever we preach a sermon, then we are in a bad way as artists and amateurs. But it is easy to get into such a state of mind, especially since we have families to support and children to educate.

One of the major crises of my ministry arose on a certain Sunday when I felt sure my sermon was going to alienate one of the chief givers in my church. This was several years ago but I shall never forget it. As I stood out in the vestry waiting to go in, I decided at the last moment to tone down the sermon and avoid displeasing the wealthy parishioner. But when the time came to preach the sermon, I stuck to my first intention and preached it regardless of effect. If I had not, my amateur spirit would have left me, and never returned! As a matter of fact, while the parishioner was deeply offended at the time, he and I later on had an opportunity to talk it all over; and the outcome was that he became a stronger supporter of the work than ever. But even if he had not, I should have been justified. A man ought never to temper his preaching or modify his ministry in order to protect his own financial position. To do so is to commit spiritual suicide. There are many good reasons why we should go as far as we can in avoiding causes of friction in our preaching; but our personal economic security is never a

good reason. Why? Because it robs us of our amateur spirit. The price is altogether too high! When worse comes to worst it is better to starve with God than to feast with Mammon.

• *Institutionalism May Be a Peril*

Our ministry is carried on through a great institution, the church. This is both an advantage and a peril. One of the most difficult things I have had to do has been to remain within the ecclesiastical organization without being mechanized by it. The church, like every other institution, has a rubber-stamp all inked and ready. We have got to be always resisting the effort to put that stamp on us!

It is not necessary for me to go into details about this. Every one of us knows about it. Our problem is how to cooperate loyally with the church and at the same time to maintain our personal integrity.

In my earlier ministry I felt this difficulty with such keenness that I went to an extreme in reaction. On the whole, I am not sorry that I did so. I do not regret my somewhat exaggerated individualism, because it helped me to remain an amateur in spirit. I have seen too many men become the mouthpieces of denominational policy at the cost of their own intellectual and spiritual self-respect. As they grow older they become less and less willing or able to express an individual opinion or even to hold an individual conviction.

My advice to younger men, especially, is to put themselves with all their might into the work of their own denomination. Then, to take an active part in interdenominational work. But while doing so, I urge them to maintain an independent and discriminating mind; so that when issues arise in which are involved questions of fundamental policy, their voices may be lifted with courage and authority in behalf of the great causes, which timid conservatism will inevitably try to side-track or defeat.

• *Discouragement and Ways Out*

The minister who is unacquainted with discouragement is *"rara avis in terris."* In fact, as the farmer said, *"There ain't any sech animile."* Especially on Monday! And discouragement will puncture the amateur spirit and leave it a poor crumpled wreck. It will, that is, unless we know how to deal with it.

My own best ally against the milder attacks of discouragement has been the recollection that every great leader in history has had his dark hours: ranging from pale gray to absolute black! I say to myself, "If such men were discouraged, it's no wonder that I am! They came out of it and so can I."

But there are times when I need more than such examples to stay my spirit. Then I simply turn away from my work and let my mind and heart go out to pasture together. Instead of trying to fight discouragement on an open front, I resort to stratagem. I retreat under cover and abandon all defenses. I have good scripture for this; for does not the Preacher say, "To every thing there is a season—a time of war and a time of peace"?

At all events, I don't want to lose my amateur spirit at the hands of discouragement; so, when discouragement threatens too menacingly, I leave the battleground and go somewhere else to recruit new forces and reorganize old ones. It makes little difference where I go; it may be to a movie or a ball game. If I played golf I might get up a foursome. Often a good novel serves as a covert of retreat. Sometimes all I need is a good night's sleep. The only important thing is that I get away before discouragement is able to lay murderous fingers on my spirit.

But there come hours and days, and even weeks or months, when no such light stratagem will avail. What then? There is no alternative but to give myself entirely into the keeping of the God whom I try to serve, and let him "bring it to pass" in his own way.

Today I received a letter from a fellow minister who is living in the uttermost depths of discouragement. He writes: "My spirit does not rise as it should, I am afraid, in these days. A situation such as this makes a man feel like such an utter failure. The simple truth is I am not needed or wanted in the organized and professional service of the churches."

So he continues at some length until almost suddenly the clouds seem to break: "I still believe in adventure and living dangerously, and I think how often Jesus must have said, Be of good cheer! When the way beyond one step was all in fog and doubt and near-despair."

This man knows the secret. It has been revealed to him. In his letter he has passed it on to me. In these few sentences from that letter I pass it on to you, with gratitude to my friend who, though faced with the collapse of his professional ministry, still keeps intact the spirit of an artist and an amateur!

• *The Peril of Self-Satisfaction*

Another word for this is smugness. The Pharisees have come to typify the sort of men who are afflicted with this disease which attacks the amateur spirit and eats it away. It is probable that Pharisees were not all self-satisfied; but their notorious representatives in the gospels have established the tradition for us.

Lest I seem to be self-righteously critical of some of my rather self-satisfied brethren, I hasten to confess that various defects in my own nature have always been so apparent to me that I have not often been tempted to be smug. My escape from this infection has been due for the most part to the fact that I have been so little exposed to it. Yet, even so, I am aware that not one of us is really immune.

My prescription for treatment of smugness is a combination of two parts consecration with one part sense of humor. This creates perspective, and perspective is a sure cure.

• *Two Cures for Smugness*

As soon as I feel an attack of the disease coming on, I make haste to remember why I entered the ministry in the first place. This takes me back to the time when I was in my early twenties. Then I wasn't smug! Then I felt no self-satisfaction. Embarrassed, inept, hesitant, faltering and afraid, I gave myself into the service of my Master and prayed that he would use me in whatever way he should choose. Then, indeed, I was suffused with a sense of utter devotion to him and to his cause. I make haste to remember this. At once I begin to be ashamed. To keep that early attitude! To hold on to the spirit that was mine in those timid and yet wonderful days!

But consecration needs to be mixed with humor. Otherwise it is too heavy, too serious. And, after all, self-satisfaction is as absurd as it is tragic.

So, I try to laugh at myself a little, and it is not very hard to do it. My family helps me in the most genial sort of way. With a wife whose rare ironical gift is expressed with charming subtlety, and two children who see their father at breakfast as well as at church, I have good allies right at my own hearth-side. I am grateful. And my congregation should be grateful too!

Nothing can replace the amateur spirit. When we have lost it the heart is gone from our ministry. Ours is a great profession, but it is more than that. It is in the profoundest sense a *calling*. And this is another way of saying that it is a fine art. It is with the love of artists for their calling that we as true ministers of Christ accept the laurel wreath or the crown of thorns, whichever it may be, as tokens of our fidelity to a Cause.

WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE

REV. RICHARD ROBERTS *is a native* of North Wales. His first ministerial experience was in the South Wales coal fields. After several important pastorates in London, he came to the United States as minister of the Church of the Pilgrims in Brooklyn, N. Y. He was then called to the American Presbyterian church, Montreal, Can. Since 1927 he has been minister of Sherbourne church, Toronto. Dr. Roberts has written a number of books, among them "The Spirit of God and the Faith of Today."

Stratfield Baptist church, Fairfield, Conn., was organized in 1751, and is the mother of five Baptist churches in the vicinity; it is the only Protestant church in a rapidly growing suburban and residential community of Bridgeport. Its minister, Rev. FRANCIS C. WHEATON, rightly takes pride in the fact that the church is a real community institution. For several years Mr. Wheaton was in business, but in 1926 he received his B.D. from Newton Theological institution, and since then has been in the Christian ministry. He was at one time assistant pastor and director of religious education at Calvary Baptist church, New Haven, Conn.

Eight years ago Rev. EDWARD L. PARSONS became bishop of the Protestant Episcopal church in California, having served as bishop coadjutor from 1919 to 1924. Bishop Parsons had in his earlier years in California ministered to churches in Menlo Park and San Mateo, and from 1904 to 1919 was rector of St. Mark's church, Berkeley. He was an instructor in philosophy in Stanford university from 1897 to 1902, and for a time lectured on the philosophy of religion at the Christian Divinity School of the Pacific. Bishop Parsons rereceived his education at Yale, and at Union Theological seminary and the Episcopal seminary; he studied also for two years in the University of Berlin.

Born in England, Rev. GEORGE A. BUTTRICK graduated from Lancaster Independent college, Manchester, in 1915, with honors in philosophy. Coming to America, he was ordained in the Congregational ministry and his first pastorate was at the First Union Congregational church, Quincy, Ill. Going east, he ministered for three years at First Congregational church, Rutland, Vt., and then went to First Presbyterian church, Buffalo, N. Y., where he remained from 1920 to 1927. In the latter year he succeeded Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin at Madison Avenue Presbyterian church, New York city. Dr. Buttrick is the author of a number of books, among them "The Parables of Jesus" and "Jesus Came Preaching." The address on "Why the Church?" was delivered before the recent international convention of Disciples of Christ.

Although born in Glasgow, Scotland, Rev. ANDREW GILLIES was early brought to America. He graduated at the Genesee Wesleyan seminary, in Lima, N. Y., and received his A.B. *cum laude* at Wesleyan university, in Connecticut. In 1895 he was ordained in the Methodist ministry, and his early pastorates were in Vermont and at Troy, N. Y. He went to St. Andrews church, New York city, in 1903, and from there to Hennepin Avenue church, Minneapolis, where he had a long ministry. He has been pastor of the Third Presbyterian church, Rochester, N. Y., since 1925.

Rev. HOLLAND F. BURR *is a Californian,* the son of a home missionary pastor. Since 1924 he has been pastor of the Oneonta Congregational church, South Pasadena, Cal. Before going to his present field, he was director of religious education in First Congregational church, Los Angeles, where he was the junior associate of Dr. Carl S. Patton. His education was received at Pomona college, Andover seminary, Harvard Divinity school and Union Theological seminary.

Rev. GEORGE A. CAMPBELL *is minister of the Union Avenue Christian church, St. Louis, Mo.*

Rev. DWIGHT BRADLEY *is minister of* the First Church in Newton, Newton Centre, Mass.

TITLES AND TEXTS

What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

HOBART D. MCKEEHAN, Abbey Reformed, Huntingdon, Pa. "Singing in the Sacrifice." 2 Chron. 29:27—"And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also."

JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM, Pacific School of Religion. "The Church of Today and Tomorrow." Isa. 60:15—"I will make thee an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations."

FOR YOUR SERMON TITLE AND TEXT

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Title of sermon

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Text used (Write out the text)

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Name of minister

.....

Name of church

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Address

SIDNEY S. SMITH, St. Paul's Reformed, Northampton, Pa. "Swindled Lives." Mark 8:37b—"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

CHARLES S. PIERCE, Evangelist Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, Tex. "The Man With a Song." Psalm 57:7—"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

WINBURN T. THOMAS, Community church, Palos Park (Chicago), Ill. "Something New Under the Sun." 2 Cor. 5:17 (R. V. margin)—"If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation."

E. S. MORELAND, Arlington Avenue Christian, Los Angeles, Cal. "Vitalizing Our Faith." Rom. 2:18 (Moffatt)—"With a sense of what is vital in religion."

GEORGE M. MILLER, Ocean Avenue Congregational, Brooklyn, N. Y. "Rocking-Chair Religion." Amos 6:1—"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion."

L. L. BOND, First Presbyterian, Waukon, Ia. "The Things That Remain." Rev. 3:2—"Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain."

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

A NEW PRESIDENT has been elected. Mr. Hoover will pass into history as a great man whose career of cumulative accomplishment and increasing leadership was broken on the hard fate of world depression. Mr. Roosevelt will enter upon his task in the trough of the depression and stands to enjoy the credit and glory of recovery. Which man is to be congratulated it is difficult to say. For neither Mr. Roosevelt nor Mr. Hoover seems able to diagnose conditions, nor does either seem to offer any solving remedy. Both men stand within the framework of capitalistic orthodoxy and hope to steady and sustain the established structure until some mysterious trend of business activity begins to appear. That trend is not yet in evidence. Perhaps Mr. Hoover should be glad to turn over the responsibility to another. It may be that Mr. Roosevelt, not having tied his hands so fast to orthodox capitalistic policies as did Mr. Hoover, may be able to step outside the traditional scheme of business and, with freer hand and a fresh mind, deal with the all-important fact that capitalism has itself broken down. The overwhelming nature of his victory gives him a freedom from the pressure of partisan and factional and personal restraints which usually bind our Presidents with election obligations. The meeting of the President and the President-elect to confer on foreign debts makes a picture which heartens and reassures the country.

The President and President-Elect

The Book of the Month

RE-THINKING MISSIONS. *The Report of the Laymen's Inquiry into the Missionary Situation in the Far East. New York, Harper and Brothers,* $2.00.

BY ALL ODDS this is the most important book for ministers (not less, however, for Christian laymen) that has appeared in a long time. It is bound to precipitate a conflict of opinions and policies that may shake organized Protestantism to its very foundations. When you touch Christian missions you touch everything that goes by the name Christian. Missions involves theology, Christian morality, religious education, ecclesiastical organization, our denominational systems, our philanthropies, and the very destiny of the Christian church. You cannot discuss missions without discussing all these and much more. The Laymen's commission has been working for two years to produce this report. Harvard's world renowned professor of philosophy, William E. Hocking, is chairman of the commission. Rufus Jones, the Quaker philosopher, is a member—altogether fifteen of America's most trusted non-ecclesiastical minds (Dr. William P. Merrill of the Brick Presbyterian church, New York City, being the only clergyman) collaborated on the Inquiry and the Report. The Commission has not flinched in observing facts and expressing its views on the most fundamental questions regarding this most cherished enterprise of modern Christianity. By all means get this book! A minister will be hopelessly behind the most vital controversy which has arisen in more than a generation unless he reads it.

A Thought for the Month

THEY TELL US that a major cause of the depression is an over-expansion of plant capacity. We have developed factories and machinery, skyscrapers, homes and apartment buildings, farm acreage, mines—everything that goes by the economic term "plant"—far beyond the consumption capacity of the population. For example, we have shoe-factory capacity to produce nine hundred million pairs of shoes a year, yet it is impossible for the American people to wear more than three hundred and fifty or four hundred million pairs of shoes in a year. Hence the shoe business has slumped. I wonder if the same kind of thing is not a major cause of the religious depression. Has not religion over-expanded its "plant"? Have we not too many denominations, too many church buildings, too many ministers, too many missionary societies, too many theological seminaries, too many church papers—in a word, a "plant capacity" all out of proportion to the proper function of religion and to the "consumptive capacity" of the community? Such an over-expansion of plant forces the church to live desperately. Compelled to keep the plant going, we try to create artificial consumption by high-pressure methods of exciting public interest. Is not the church the victim of the same delusion which forced business to maintain itself by resorting to fantastic advertising designed to inflate demand in order to dispose of its over-supply of products? This is bad in business, but it is far worse in religion. The necessity of keeping the plant going causes us to cheapen and dilute the product with false or irrelevant appeals. Recall the Interchurch World movement. Why did it fail? It failed because it projected a vast plant structure designed not only to be a clearing house for the gifts of devoted Christians, but to secure gifts from the "friendly citizen." But when it sent its solicitors after the "friendly citizen" he could not be found! Its plant was disproportionate to its real function. It is my belief that while business is engaged in shrinking its over-developed plant capacity, the Christian church will act wisely if it does the same thing.

The Religious Depression

Charles Clayton Morrison

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